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ABSTRACT

Information gathered in the 1974 statewide survey of Tennesseeans' opinions on higher education is compared with similar information gathered in other states. Questions asked concerned confidence in institutions, freedom to teach, quality of education and college type, favorability to increased spending, favorability to institutional expansion, university budget information, public services performed by institutions, kinds of contact with institutions, sources of institutional information, and preferred sources of additional funds. Comparisons are made with studies in Washington, Wisconsin, and Michigan, and with two national studies made in 1964 and 1974. (MSE)

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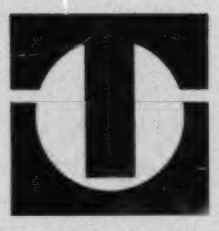

Preliminary Report No. 3

1974 Statewide Opinion Survey

COMPARISON OF TENNESSEE OPINIONS WITH U.S. AND OTHER STATES' OPINIONS

by
Jack B. Haskins, Director
March, 1975

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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COMPARISON OF TENNESSEE OPINIONS WITH U.S. AND OTHER STATES' OPINIONS

Introduction

Comparison of data from one study with another study often lends additional meaning to statistical results. Such comparison helps put results into proper perspective and lends confidence to interpretation.

Twelve of the questions in the 1974 statewide survey of Tennesseeans' opinions on higher education have been asked at other times in other locations. In most cases, wording of the questions is identical or very similar making direct comparison of results possible; in some cases, local needs made it necessary to alter question wording, so that comparisons need to be qualified.

The 12 comparison questions in the present survey, along with the matching study dates and locations, are listed below:

Question (number) and topic	Comparison study
(21) Confidence in various U.S. institutions	United States, 1974
(15) Freedom to teach, state vs. private colleges	United States, 1964
(16) Best education, state vs. private colleges	United States, 1964
(17) Best education for first two years, 2-year vs. 4-year colleges	United States, 1964
(3) Favorability to increased spending for various state services	State of Washington, 1970
(4) Favorability to increased spending for various kinds of education	State of Washington, 1970
(22) Favorability to expansion of university	Wisconsin, 1963
(23) Estimates of university budget proportion obtained from state	Wisconsin, 1963
(24) Services performed by university for state	Wisconsin, 1963
(25) Kinds of contact with university	Wisconsin, 1963
(9) Sources of information about colleges	Michigan, 1959
(19) Preferred source of additional funds for state-supported colleges	Michigan, 1959

In making comparisons of the 1974 Tennessee data with other data, one should keep in mind that any differences observed may be due to differences in locations, in time, or sometimes in question wording..

All Tennessee information is from the following source: Haskins, Jack B. 1974 Statewide Opinion Survey: Tennesseans' Opinions Toward Higher Education and The University of Tennessee. (Preliminary Report No. 2) Knoxville: Communications Research Center, University of Tennessee, February, 1975.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM COMPARISON OF 1974 TENNESSEE STUDY WITH THE U.S. AND OTHER STATES

1. Tennesseans ranked their confidence in seven major institutions in about the same order as did the 1974 U.S. public as a whole. Colleges were the highest ranked institutions among both groups.

2. In both Tennessee and the 1964 U.S., the public believes that teachers in private universities have more freedom than in state universities.

3. In both Tennessee and the 1964 U.S., the public believes that private universities offer a better education than state universities.

4. In both Tennessee and the 1964 U.S., the public believes that four-year colleges offer a better education than two-year colleges for the first two years of college.

5. In Tennessee and in 1970 Washington state, there was high correspondence in spending priorities for seven government services. Both ranked law enforcement first in spending priorities. Education ranked second in Tennessee, fourth in Washington. Agriculture was ranked higher by Tennessee, environmental protection higher by Washington.

6. In both Tennessee and 1970 Washington state, spending priorities for vocational schools and public schools were higher than for four-year colleges.

7. In a comparison of Tennessee with 1963 Wisconsin, it was found that...

   a. In Wisconsin, more people favored expanding the primary state university than in Tennessee. (This finding is qualified, however, because of large differences in question wording.)

   b. In both Tennessee and Wisconsin, citizens guessed that about half the state university funds came from the state government. (Median guess: Tennessee 49.9%; Wisconsin 52.2%)

   c. About half the citizens in both Tennessee and Wisconsin don't know of anything else done by the primary state university besides

teaching. (Tennessee, 56%; Wisconsin, 44%). Tennesseeans are more likely to know about the university's recreation/sports/cultural services, Wisconsinites are more likely to know about agricultural services, continuing education and research.

d. Tennesseeans reported more contacts with the primary state university than did Wisconsinites. (This finding is qualified, however, because of large differences in question wording and presentation.

8. In Tennessee, more than in 1959 Michigan, the mass media (newspapers, radio, television) are more likely to be sources of information about colleges. In Michigan, conversation is more likely to be a source of such information.

9. In both Tennessee and 1959 Michigan, state taxes are strongly preferred over student fees as a source of additional funds for state-supported institutions of higher education.

Conclusion: All in all, Tennesseans do not appear to be greatly different from the rest of the country in certain opinions toward higher education and their state university. In some cases, such differences as do exist are explainable as being due to question wording or year of surveying.

Confidence in Various Institutions[1]

Tennessee, 1974 vs. U.S., 1974[2]

The rank order of confidence in seven institutions is about the same in Tennessee as in the whole United States. However, Tennesseeans are somewhat more likely than the U.S. public to have high confidence in "colleges" and the military, somewhat less likely than the U.S. public for the other five institutions.

	Percentage reporting "great deal of confidence" in institution			
	Tennessee		U.S.	
	%	Rank	%	Rank
Colleges[3]	44	1	40	1
Military	41	2	33	3
U.S. Supreme Court	27	3	40	1
Television news	27	3	31	4
Press	21	5	25	6
Federal Exec. Branch	20	6	28	5
Major companies	15	7	21	7

[1](Question 21) "I'd like to find out how much confidence you have in the leaders of some major institutions in this country. As I name each one, just tell me if you have a great deal of confidence, some confidence, or no confidence in the leadership." (Exact wording of question in U.S. survey not given.)

[2]Source: ANPA, Newspaper Information Service Newsletter, 14:9, Sept. 1974 Data based on national survey of 1,527 households in Sept., 1974, conducted by Harris survey organization.

[3]Tennessee survey, "higher education"; U.S., "colleges"

Teachers' Freedom in State vs. Private Universities[1]

Tennessee, 1974, vs. U.S., 1964[2]

In both Tennessee and the U.S., the public believes that teachers have more freedom in private than in state universities. However, the U.S. sample is considerably more likely to say "no difference" or "don't know"; this difference in results may be due to question wording differences.

	Percentage responding to various options	
More freedom in...	Tennessee	U.S.
Private U.	44%	16%
State U.	28	10
No difference	5	29
Don't know	23	42

[1]Tennessee (Question 15): "Who do you think has more freedom to teach what they want, teachers in a state university or in a private university?"

U.S.: "Do you think there is any difference in the freedom the teachers have to teach what they want to in a state university as compared to a private university?"

[2]Survey Research Center. The Public Image of State and Private Universities. Appendix A. Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, March, 1964. Data based on national survey of 1,310 individuals, exact date not given.

Best Education, State vs. Private Universities[1]

Tennessee, 1974, vs. U.S., 1964[2]

In both Tennessee and the U.S., the public believes that a better education can be obtained in private than in state universities. The U.S. sample is more likely to say "no difference" or "don't know."

Best education obtained in...	Percentage responding to various options	
	Tennessee	U.S.
Private universities	39%	17%
State universities	27	12
No difference	14	32
Don't know & other	20	38

[1]Tennessee (Question 16): "Do you think a person gets a better education in a state university or in a private university?"

U.S.: Same as above

[2]Source: Survey Research Center, op.cit.

Best Education, 2-year vs. 4-year College[1]

Tennessee, 1974, vs. U.S., 1964[2]

In both Tennessee and the U.S., the public believes that for the first two years of college, a four-year college is better than a two-year college. The U.S. sample is more likely to say "no difference" or "don't know."

For first two years, best education obtained in...	Percentage responding to various options	
	Tennessee	U.S.
2-year colleges	33%	6%
4-year colleges	41	12
No difference	6	32
Don't know and other	16	50

[1]Tennessee (Question 18): "For the first two years of college, would a young person get a better education in a two-year community college or in a four-year college?"

U.S.: "Do you think there is any difference in how good an education a person gets for the first two years in a four-year college or a two-year community college?"

[2]Source: Survey Research Center, op. cit.

Favorability Toward Increased Government Spending for Various Government Services[1]

Tennessee, 1974, vs. Washington state, 1970[2]

Regarding the desirability of increased spending for seven kinds of government services measured in both states, there was a high correlation between Tennessee and Washington. Both ranked law enforcement first. The greatest discrepancies between the two states were for agricultural assistance (ranked higher in Tennessee) and environmental protection (ranked higher in Washington).

Increased state spending for...	Rank order of favorability[1] Tennessee	Washington
Law enforcement	1	1
Education	2	4
Medical services	3	3
Agricultural assistance	4	7
Environmental protection	5	2
Cities assistance	6	6
Welfare services	7	5

[1]Tennessee (Question 3): "Should state spending be increased or decreased or stay about the same for ...."

Washington: "The government spends public funds in many areas, some of which are listed on this page. For each of the areas listed below, please indicate whether you would favor government spending less, the same amount, or more money that is now being spent."

Only the rank order of favorability is shown here, since the statistical method for reporting results varied in Tennessee (percentages) and in Washington (scale score means).

[2]Source: Dillman, Don and Christenson, James "Toward the assessment of public values." Public Opinion Quarterly (Volume no. missing--probably 35, 36 or 37), pp. 206-221.

Favorability Toward Increased Government Spending for Various Kinds of Education[1]

Tennessee, 1974, vs. Washington state, 1970

For three specific kinds of educational spending, Tennessee and Washington were very similar. In third place for both states was increased spending for four-year colleges.

Increased spending for...	Rank order of favorability	
	Tennessee	Washington
Vocational/trade schools	1	2
Public schools (-12th grade)	2	1
Four-year colleges	3	3

[1]Question wording and source, same as on previous page.

Opinions on Expansion of the State University[1]

Tennessee, 1974, vs. Wisconsin, 1963[2]

In Tennessee, 40% favored expanding UT-Knoxville, while in Wisconsin 68% favored "expanding and improving" the University of Wisconsin. This large difference is possibly due to a big difference in the way the questions were worded (see footnote 1 below).

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[1]Tennessee (Question 22): "...Would you prefer to expand or hold constant the University of Tennessee at Knoxville?"

Wisconsin: "In your opinion, should the University of Wisconsin constantly expand and improve even though this would require more tax support from the state, or should the University try to hold the line, even though some qualified students might not be admitted in the future and some research activities might have to be cut back?"

[2]Source for all Wisconsin data: Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory, Wisconsin Citizens View Their University. Author: University of Wisconsin, University Extension Division, Report No. 12, January 1965.

Guesses on State Government's Contribution to University Budget[1]

Both Tennessee and Wisconsin citizens guessed that about half the state universities' funds came from the state government. The median guesses were 49.9% in Tennessee and 52.2% in Wisconsin.

[1]Tennessee (Question 23): "I'd like just your guess as to what percentage of the total (University of Tennessee system) budget is obtained from the state government."

Wisconsin: "Guessing again, what percentage of the total University of Wisconsin budget is obtained by tax money from the state?"

Other Services of the University Besides Teaching[1]

Tennessee vs. Wisconsin 1963

A high proportion of the citizens in both Tennessee and Wisconsin don't know of anything else the state university does besides teach; this ignorance is somewhat higher in Tennessee (56%) than in Wisconsin (44%). Otherwise, there is not much correspondence between the answers from the two states. Tennesseeans are more likely to mention recreation/sports/cultural services, while Wisconsinites are more likely to mention agricultural services, continuing/extension education, and research.

Other services of state u.	Percentage freely responding various services	
	Tennessee	Wisconsin
Don't know of any	56%	44%
Recreation/sports/cultural	13	5
Agriculture research/services	12	25
Continuing/extension education	11	21
Medical services	9	6
Research (except agricultural)	8	26
Does nothing else	2	1

[1]Tennessee (Question 24): "In addition to teaching students, what other things can you think of that the University of Tennessee system does for the state?"

Wisconsin: wording identical except "if any" added after "things."

Kinds of Contact with the University System[1]

Tennessee 1974 vs. Wisconsin 1963

About three-fourths of Tennessee citizens report some kind of contact with the UT system, considerably more than the one-fifth of Wisconsinites reporting state university contact. However, this large difference is undoubtedly due to (1) Tennessee questions inquired about family contacts, Wisconsin about the individual, and

(2) a greater variety of modes of contact including sports, recreation and cultural events were mentioned to the Tennessee sample than in the Wisconsin survey (which did not mention sports, recreation or cultural events).

	Percentage responding having various kinds of contact	
	Tennessee	Wisconsin
Information through the mail	50%	2%
Took course on campus	44	2
Attended workshop/conference	27	3
Agriculture extension service	25	7
Took correspondence course	19	7
Other kinds of contact	7	2

[1]Tennessee (Question 25): "As I name several ways in which a university can make contact with the public, please tell me you, or anyone in your immediate family, has ever had that sort of contact with any unit in the UT-system."

Wisconsin: "Have you ever received any service directly from the University of Wisconsin? We mean such things as professional help, extension courses, attendance at meetings or institutes, or adult education programs and so forth." (If yes, "What programs, courses or other services of the U.W. have you made use of?")

Sources of Information About Colleges and Universities[1]

Tennessee, 1974, vs. Michigan, 1959[2]

In Tennessee, the mass media (newspapers, radio and television) are more likely to be sources of information about higher education than in Michigan. Conversation is more likely to be a source of such information in Michigan than in Tennessee.

	Percentage freely responding various sources	
	Tennessee	Michigan
Newspapers	51%	46%
Conversation	45	65
Radio & TV	38	16
Don't know	6	3

[1]Tennessee (Question 9): "Where do you get most of your information about colleges and universities in Tennessee?" (Michigan wording of question not given.)

[2]Wells, D. E. "The public image of higher education" Search, 6:2, 1961.

Preferred Source of Funds for State Colleges and Universities[1]

Tennessee, 1974, vs. Michigan, 1959[2]

In both Tennessee and Michigan, state taxes are preferred about two to one over student fees as a source of additional funds for state-supported higher education institutions. The range of responses was almost identical in these two states.

Preferred source	Percentage responding to various options	
	Tennessee	Michigan
State taxes	41%	44%
Student fees	19	23
Both	27	26
Don't know	10	3
Other	4	4

[1]Tennessee (Question 19): "When extra money is needed to pay for state-supported colleges and universities in Tennessee--where do you think the money should come from--student fees or state taxes or where?" (Exact wording of Michigan question not given.)

[2]Wells, loc. cit.